IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims to read as follows:

1. (original) A method of preparing an imadizolium salt comprising:

(a) synthesizing a diimine compound; and

(b) subjecting the diimine compound to ring closure conditions.

2. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein:

the diimine compound is from the group consisting of 1, 3, diaryldiazabutadiene, 1, 3, dialkyldiazabutadiene, and 1, 3, arylalkyldiazabutadiene; and

paraformaldehyde and a protic acid provide the ring closure conditions.

3. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein the diimine compound is **1.**

4. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein the diimine compound is **3.**

5. (currently amended) The method of ~~any one of claims 1-4,~~ claim 1, wherein the diimine compound is subjected to ring closure conditions at or below room temperature.

6. (currently amended) The method of ~~any one of claims 1-5,~~ claim 1, wherein the salt includes a counterion.

7. (original) The method of claim 6, wherein the counterion is determined by the acid used for ring closure.

8. (currently amended) The method of ~~any one of claims 1-7,~~ claim 1, wherein the diimine compound is synthesized at room temperature.

9. (currently amended) The method of ~~any one of claims 1-8,~~ claim 1, wherein between steps (a) and (b) the diimine compound is mixed with a solvent from the group consisting of: methanol, ethyl acetate, ethanol, tetrahydrofuran, and toluene.

10. (currently amended) The method of ~~any one of claims 1-9,~~ claim 1, wherein the synthesis of the diimine compound and the ring closure are carried out in air.

11. (currently amended) The method of ~~any one of claims 1-10,~~ claim 1, wherein no solvent pre-drying steps are performed.

12. (original) The salt prepared by the method of claim 2 when the diimine compound is 1, 3, arylalkyldiazabutadiene.

13. (currently amended) The salt prepared by the method of claim 4 ~~or any preceding claim depending directly or indirectly on claim 4~~.

14. (original) The imadizolium salt 1,3-Bis(2,6-diisopropylphenyl)imidazolium chloride.

15. (currently amended) The invention of ~~any prior claim,~~ claim 1, wherein the protic acid is HCl, HBF_4, or HPF_6.

16. (currently amended) The invention of ~~any prior claim,~~ claim 1, wherein the protic acid is HCl.

17. (original) The method of claim 9, wherein the solvent is ethyl acetate.

18. (original) A method of preparing an imadizolium salt comprising:

    (a) providing a diimine compound from the group consisting of **1** and **3**;

    (b) mixing the diimine compound with a solvent from the group consisting of: methanol, ethyl acetate, ethanol, tetrahydrofuran, and toluene; and

    (c) at or below room temperature, mixing the diimine compound and solvent with paraformaldehyde and a protic acid .

19. (original) The method of claim 18, wherein the diimine compound is **1** and the salt is **2**.

20. (original) The method of claim 18, wherein the diimine compound is **3** and the salt is **4**.

21. (cancelled)